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WESTERN EUROPE – CANADA – INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Trudeau's Friend Appointed Canadian Ambassador to France

The appointment of Gerard Pelletier, cabinet official and long-time friend of Prime Minister Trudeau, as Canadian ambassador to France is another sign that relations between Ottawa and Paris are continuing to improve.

Trudeau began his effort to normalize relations with France when he visited Paris last December. Ties between Ottawa and Paris had been cool since 1967 when former president de Gaulle advocated independence for Quebec. French Minister of State and Interior Poniatowski's visit to Ottawa this July brought an announcement that French President Giscard would visit Canada no later than the spring of 1977, rather than near the end of his term in 1981, and an agreement to expand cultural exchanges between France and the Canadian provinces.

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Pelletier is highly intelligent, scholarly, austere, and complex. He and Trudeau have known each other since college days in the 1940s. Together with Jean Marchand, they entered national politics in 1965 and are known in political circles as "the three wise men."

Pelletier is not temperamentally suited for the political fray into which he has been thrown over the past few years. Most recently, he has been involved in the federal-Quebec jurisdictional battle over control of communications policy, and earlier he had the task of forming and carrying out the program to advance bilingualism, a highly emotional issue throughout Canada. Pelletier reportedly has wanted the Paris post for some time. (Confidential No Foreign Dissem)

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Corsican General Strike Paralyzes Island

A 24-hour general strike on the French island of Corsica yesterday was the biggest show of popular sympathy for the Corsican autonomy movement in recent years.

The strike, which was supported by most of the major trade unions, professional groups, and hotel and restaurant owners on the island, was called to protest tough police handling of recent incidents involving an autonomist group. Strikers endorsed autonomist demands for:

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- A direct voice in the management of the island's domestic political affairs.
- The return to Corsican control of farmland now owned by French refugees from Algeria.
- Removal from the island of some 3,000 French police reinforcements.
- Release of the 20 or 30 Corsican autonomists now under arrest in connection with recent incidents.

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The success of the strike shows that many Corsicans support the goals, though not necessarily the violent methods, of the relatively small autonomist groups. A spokesman for the Corsican businessmen's association pointed out that the strike demonstrated that "the Corsican problem is not a rebellion by a few fanatics, but a cry of distress and an affirmation of solidarity by an entire people."

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The strike may also be an indication that organizations more representative of the general population are now attempting to seize the initiative from the extremist groups. (Confidential)

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